

COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

United States Senate

December 9, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In recent years, Indiana has experienced an increase in prescription drug abuse and heroin use. These epidemics have affected many communities across the state. In particular, the number of heroin related deaths in Indiana has nearly tripled since 2010. The passionate advocacy of those family members and friends who have lost loved ones to addiction, including Justin Phillips, is making an lasting impact on how lawmakers and the general public view substance use disorders. For this reason, I am proud to nominate Justin Phillips as a Champion of Change for her service in advancing prevention, treatment, and recovery services in Indiana.

After losing her 20-year old son, Aaron Sims, to a heroin overdose in October 2013, Justin became a leading voice for families facing addiction in Indiana. Through her advocacy and leadership, many have come to realize that people from all walks of life can find themselves battling addiction and even using heroin. She is working to raise awareness of the dangers of this drug, reduce the stigma associated with addiction, and ensure that adequate resources and support exist for addicts and their families in the area so that other families will not have to experience what she went through. Not only has Justin changed the face of addiction for many in Central Indiana, but in just over two years, her tireless efforts have produced significant and lasting results, including directly funding the purchase of the opioid overdose reversal drug, naloxone, for several law enforcement agencies, producing an educational program for schools that speaks directly to high school students, and helping to develop and secure the passage of a state law to allow third party access to naloxone.

In June 2014, Justin founded a non-profit organization called Overdose Lifeline with the initial goal of helping to purchase naloxone for first-responders in the Indianapolis area. In the following months, Justin expanded her efforts to improve access to naloxone by working with Indiana legislators on a bill known as Aaron's Law that would allow family members and friends of addicts to acquire naloxone through a prescription and certain entities such as pharmacies, treatment centers, and overdose awareness advocacy groups to dispense naloxone under a standing order. After months of dedicated

advocacy, including testimony at the Statehouse from Justin and other Hoosiers who had lost loved ones to a drug overdose, Aaron's Law was enacted in April 2015.

Justin also has focused her work on providing educational resources and support events for families and individuals impacted by heroin addiction, as well as law enforcement and school officials. These resources offer valuable information about the risks associated with substance abuse, including prescription drug abuse and heroin use, the impact that substance abuse has on an individual's family and friends, and the support available for those looking for treatment for their addiction. In addition, Overdose Lifeline conducts naloxone training and distributes naloxone to first-responders and the general public.

Below are several links that provide additional information on Justin's work to address drug addiction in Indiana.

Indianapolis Star article on Justin dealing with the death of her son, Aaron Sims -

<http://www.indystar.com/story/opinion/columnists/matthew-tully/2014/04/18/tully-young-quarterback-lost-heroin-grip/7871919/>

Overdose Lifeline's website - <http://www.overdose-lifeline.org/>

A video detailing the beginning of Overdose Lifeline and Justin's work advocating for Aaron's Law -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6imADpeRugk>

An Overdose Lifeline educational video that aims to increase awareness about the risks related to drug abuse and addiction - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21FItc9x4VI>

Additional articles on Justin's work through Overdose Lifeline:

http://www.greenfieldreporter.com/view/local_story/Schools-push-drug-prevention-e_1445911330

<http://fox59.com/2015/07/23/officers-in-boone-county-carrying-new-tool/>

Justin's accomplishments over the past year are proof of the power that a dedicated individual has to effect change in her community. Justin's efforts on behalf of Hoosier families, in memory of her son, are making an extraordinary difference in Central Indiana and across the state. Justin Phillips exemplifies the qualities of a true Champion of Change, and I am proud to recommend her for this honor.

Sincerely,



Joe Donnelly
United States Senator